THE NEW DEMOCRAT

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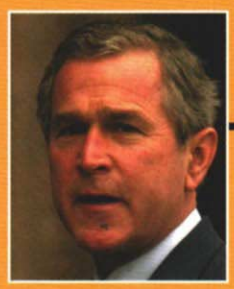
Special Issue

BLUEPRINT

IDEAS FOR A NEW CENTURY

Why Gore lost



And how Democrats can come back

AL FROM: Building a new progressive majority
WILL MARSHALL: Revitalizing the party of ideas
REP. ADAM SMITH: Changing the national message

Plus Penn's Poll

How voters saw Gore and Bush, the messages that worked and failed, the perils of populism, and the debate that never happened on the New Economy

Democratic Leadership Council

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BLUEPRINT

Election 2000

SHUTTING THE DOOR: A series of miscalculations derailed the Gore campaign. Populism, not building on the administration's successes, a lack of appeal to men, a failure to reach out to New Economy constituencies, the lack of a compelling central message — all contributed to a tie that was decided by a court. But a centrist agenda of empowering ideas and enabling government can open the presidential door to Democrats in 2004.

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Why a magazine on "Why Gore lost"?

Didn't the vice president win the popular vote? Wasn't he perhaps the real winner in Florida? Yes on both counts. But the crucial question for Democrats seeking lessons from the 2000 election isn't whether Al Gore was – or should have been – the hairbreadth victor. It's how he got himself into such a squeaker in the first place.

How did a sitting vice president take one of the great winning hands in political history – unprecedented peace and prosperity, a president of his own party with historically high job approval ratings, all the advantages of incumbency – and play it into a tie that was finally decided in the courts? How did he whittle a vote share predicted by respected political science models at between 53 percent and 60 percent into a 48 percent dead heat with George W. Bush?

The answer, as Al From points out, lies in the Gore campaign's failure to understand the changing social, economic, and *political* demographics of America. From notes that Americans today are richer, better educated, more suburban, more wired, and more invested in the stock markets than they were even eight years ago, much less two decades ago. More important, people who identify themselves as middle class outnumber all others by 3-to-1. Any campaign that is based on the old class principles and fails to appeal to the great mass in the middle – and to its most influential subgroup, the rising learning class – will not be able to forge a winning majority.

From lays out a strategy for rebuilding a coalition that includes the party's traditional base but also reaches other key voter groups with an agenda built on New Democrat principles.

Will Marshall argues that the vice president's campaign often sounded like a rerun of the failed Democratic efforts of the 1980s, focused on special interests and bereft of a compelling central message. Marshall calls on Democrats in the loyal opposition to revitalize their party with fresh ideas to equip Americans for the New Economy.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.) notes that national Democrats sent a big government message that does not resonate in increasingly important suburban congressional districts like the one he represents outside Seattle. He shows how Democrats can win – and hold – such districts with New Democrat campaigns.

Finally, Mark J. Penn's poll gives it to us by the numbers. It reveals how Gore's failure to build on the successes of the Clinton-Gore administration – especially the economic ones – cost him points. While he won on a host of specific issues, it is equally clear that Gore lost on such meta-themes as changing the tone in Washington and smaller government.

What emerges from these articles is a blueprint for success in 2002 and 2004. If the candidates follow it, predicts From, we'll see a Democrat back in the White House four years from now.

—Peter Ross Range

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"The new electorate of the Information Age is increasingly dominated by middle- and upper-middle class voters who live in the suburbs, work in the New Economy, are culturally tolerant, and have moderate political views."

–Al From

"Bush's success in hanging the albatross of 'big government' around Gore's neck set back efforts by New Democrats over the last decade to identify their party with a less centralized and bureaucratic model for public activism."

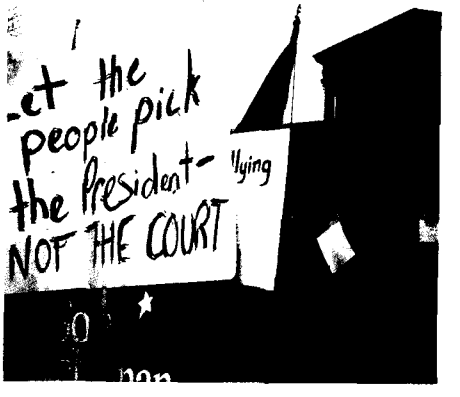
–Will Marshall

"The big-government message could not have been better presented than it was in 2000....The party united around the message and, for the most part, articulated it with great enthusiasm and clarity. It didn't work. We lost."

–Rep. Adam Smith

"While Al Gore won on the individual issues of the campaign, he lost on the broader meta-themes of the election. George W. Bush's central messages of smaller government and of changing the tone in Washington were able to overcome his deficiency on the issues."

–Mark J. Penn



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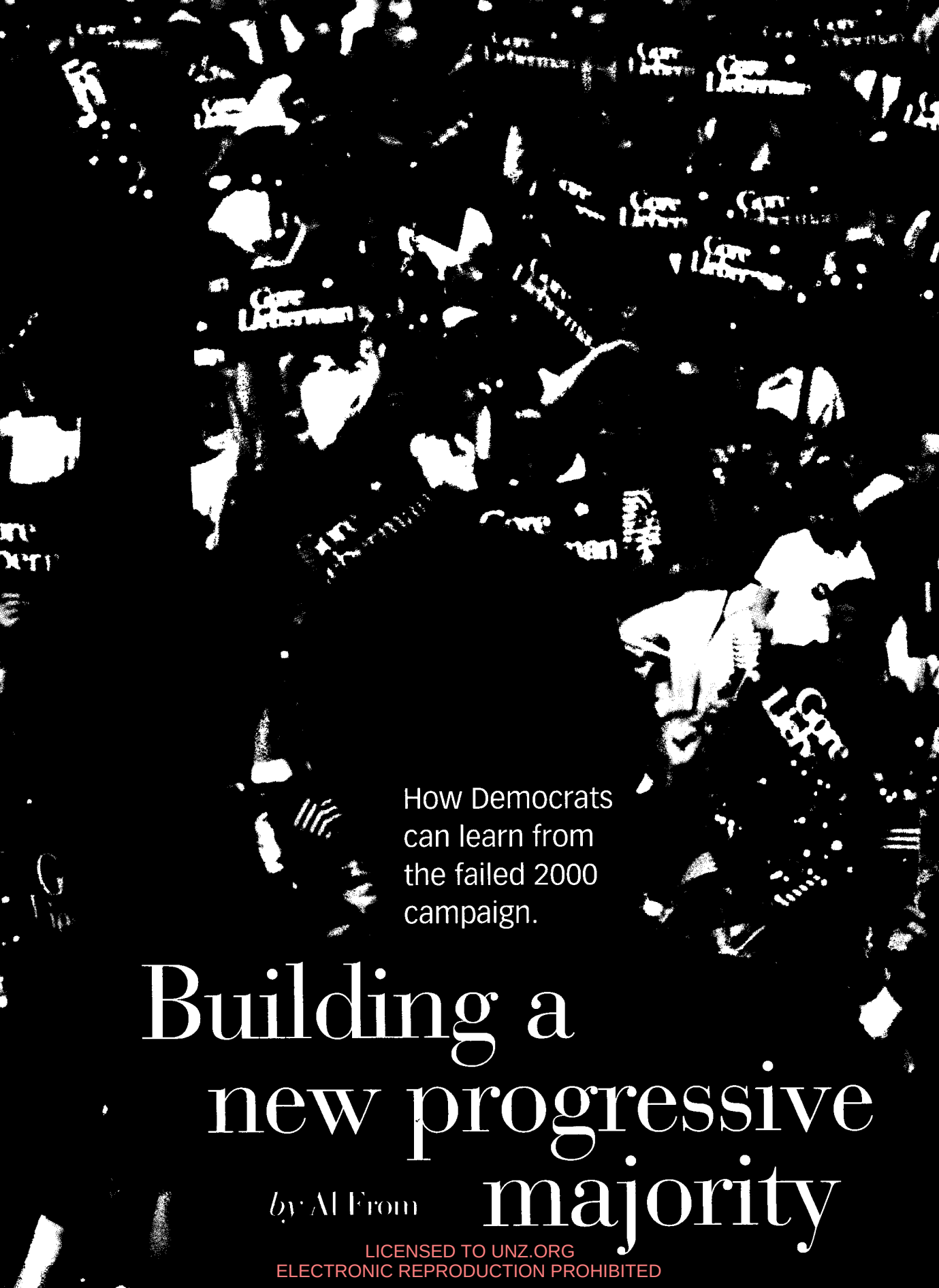

How Democrats can learn from the failed 2000 campaign.

Building a new progressive majority

by Al From

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As Democrats look beyond our disappointing 2000 election to 2002 and 2004, we need to build a new progressive majority for the Information Age, not try to recreate the Industrial Age coalition of the mid-20th century that can never again be put back together.

Our new progressive coalition must expand beyond the Democratic base. It must include men as well as women, whites as well as African-Americans and Hispanics, suburbanites as well as city dwellers, moderates and even some conservatives as well as liberals. Above all, it must unite the interests and the support of voters in the working class with those in what scholars William Galston and Elaine Kamarck have called "the rising learning class" — middle- and upper-middle class suburbanites and New Economy workers.

"In the Information Age, Democrats must offer a modern agenda that embraces the New Economy, promotes activist but limited government that empowers its citizens, and furthers both mainstream values and cultural tolerance."

Vice President Gore failed to put together such a new progressive coalition. What should have been a comfortable Gore victory became a virtual tie, and President-elect George W. Bush won narrowly in overtime.

Rather than obsess about the Gore campaign's shortcomings, Democrats need to glean lessons from his defeat to help us build a majority coalition in 2002 and 2004. There are three important lessons that can guide Democrats as we look ahead.

First, to forge a new progressive majority, Democrats must speak to a fast-changing America as it is and will be, not as it was. The demographic changes that are reshaping the American electorate accelerated in the 2000 election. A durable 21st century political and governing majority necessarily must keep pace with those changes. In short, we must look to the future, not to the past, for political success in the 21st century.

Second, in the 2000 election Gore chose a populist rather than a New Democrat message. As a result, voters viewed him as too liberal and identified him as an advocate of big government. Those perceptions, whether fair or not, hurt him with male voters in general and with key New Economy swing voters in particular. By emphasizing class warfare he seemed to be talking to Industrial Age America, not Information Age America.

Third, the core principles of the New Democrat movement — opportunity for all, responsibility from all, a community of all — must be the foundation of a new progressive majority.

In the Information Age, Democrats must offer a modern agenda that embraces the New Economy, promotes activist but limited government that empowers its citizens, and furthers both mainstream values and cultural tolerance. In the Information Age, the ideas we support and the messages we deliver will be linked to our political success more closely than ever. The New Democrat message is the only progressive message with appeal broad enough to win support from a majority of the new electorate.

This is the bottom line: The New Economy is creating a new electorate that demands a new politics. The sharp class differences of the Industrial Age are becoming less distinct as more and more Americans move into the middle and upper-middle classes. The New Deal political philosophy that defined our politics for most of the 20th century has run its course; the political coalition it spawned has been split. Like Humpty Dumpty, the New Deal coalition cannot be put back together again. The new electorate is affluent, educated, diverse, suburban, "wired," and moderate. And it responds more favorably to the New Democrat political philosophy than to any other.

In the Industrial Age, the working class dominated the electorate. The new electorate of the Information Age is increasingly dominated by middle- and upper-middle class voters who live in the suburbs, work in the New Economy, are culturally tolerant, and have moderate political views. These new voters respond to Information Age political messages, not those of the Industrial Age.

Changing Electorate

The pace of demographic change in the electorate is staggering.

The electorate is rapidly becoming more

Al From is president of the Democratic Leadership Council.

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GOING WHERE THE VOTERS ARE: More affluent, better educated, more suburbanized voters are fiscally conservative and socially tolerant. They look for government that is smaller but more effective. Gore missed this rising constituency.

affluent. The percentage of all voters with annual family incomes of more than $50,000 grew from 32 percent in 1992, to 39 percent in 1996, to 53 percent in 2000. The percentage of voters with annual family incomes of more than $75,000 rose from 12 percent in 1992, to 18 percent in 1996, to 28 percent in 2000. Meanwhile, the percentage of voters with annual family incomes of less than $30,000 dropped from 38 percent in 1992, to 34 percent in 1996, to 23 percent in 2000.

The electorate is increasingly invested in the private economy. Seventy percent of voters in 2000 said they owned stock. Gore's running mate, Sen. Joe Lieberman, recalls having breakfast at a fire station during his vice presidential campaign. He asked the firefighters what they'd be talking about if he were not there. Their answer: the stock market.

The electorate is more educated. Forty-two percent of voters in 2000 had college degrees, and 74 percent had at least some college-level education. Two decades ago, only 33 percent of voters had college degrees and only 61 percent went past high school.

The electorate is more racially and ethnically diverse. In 1980, 89 percent of voters were white and 9 percent were black. In 2000, the electorate was 81 percent white, 10 percent black, 7 percent Hispanic, and 2 percent Asian.

The electorate is increasingly suburban. In 2000, 29 percent of voters lived in urban areas (with only 9 percent living in large cities), 28 percent in rural areas, and 43 percent in suburbs. A quarter century ago, the number of urban, rural, and suburban congressional districts was roughly equal. Today,

"Sen. Joe Lieberman recalls having breakfast at a fire station during his vice presidential campaign. He asked the firefighters what they'd be talking about if he were not there. Their answer: the stock market."

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there are more suburban congressional districts than urban and rural districts combined.

The electorate is becoming wired at a blistering pace. Four years ago, only 26 percent of voters said they used the Internet regularly. In 2000, that figure was up to 64 percent. Polling for BLUEPRINT by Mark J. Penn shows that a quarter of the electorate is now made up of wired workers — New Economy workers who work with computers or in self-directed teams — a category that did not even exist just four years ago. And wired workers can now be found throughout the economy, not just in the high technology sector. I saw this firsthand when I traveled with Lieberman to Visteon, an auto parts plant operated jointly with the United Auto Workers in Ypsilanti, Mich. Workers who once operated lathes and machine tools were now working with keyboards and screens as well. "I've been here 28 years and we've made a lot of changes," one worker told Lieberman. "If we hadn't, we wouldn't be here today."

"It's little wonder that 27 percent of voters today describe themselves as belonging to the upper-middle class, 46 percent to the middle class, and only 18 percent to the working class."

And, even though the electorate is aging, it is undergoing generational change. We estimate that fewer than 10 percent of voters in 2000 were New Deal era voters. That's important, because the New Deal era was the only period during which Americans looked to a strong centralized federal government. Today's more skeptical generations — whose defining political experiences were Vietnam, Watergate, and double-digit inflation, not the Depression and World War II — are much more leery of big government.

It's little wonder that 27 percent of voters today describe themselves as belonging to the upper-middle class, 46 percent to the middle class, and only 18 percent to the working class.

These predominantly middle and upper-middle class voters are much more moderate than their counterparts two decades ago. Half of last year's voters identified themselves as moderates, 20 percent as liberals, and 29 percent as conservatives. In 1980, the electorate was much more polarized — 40 percent of voters said they were conservatives, 24 percent liberals, and just 36 percent moderates.

In sum, the 2000 electorate was markedly different than the electorates of just 10 or 20 years ago. Old political arrangements and old political philosophies must give way to new ones.

A New Progressive Coalition

A decade ago, New Democrats set out to forge a progressive coalition that united the interests of the Democratic base and the middle class — of those in the middle class and struggling to stay there and those aspiring to get there. Today, even that coalition, while still important, would not be big enough by itself to achieve a majority.

That's why, given all the progress and demographic change of the past 10 years, a new progressive majority in the first decade of the 21st century will require winning the middle class, not just the working class, and being competitive among the more affluent and educated upper-middle class. Simply put, the new progressive majority must unite the interests of those in the working class with those in the rising learning class.

To forge that new majority, a Democratic candidate must win the support of not just factory workers, but of workers in suburban office complexes as well. During the past eight years, 22 million new jobs were created in America — almost all of them in the New Economy. The number of manufacturing jobs remained essentially unchanged at 18 million. The new workers are employed in offices, in services, in health care and finance — in other words, in the New Economy. And they increasingly live in the suburbs. Democrats need to appeal to them.

Democrats will also have to cut the gender gap in order to forge a new majority. Our gender problem is men — we don't win enough of them. While Democrats need to continue winning a majority of women, we must also be competitive among men.

We must build a multiracial coalition by winning more white voters. Democrats should continue to win an overwhelming majority of African-American and Hispanic voters. But we cannot afford to get clobbered among white voters for the simple reason that there are eight times as many white voters as there are black voters, and four times as many white

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BUILDING ON THE BASE: Thanks to leaders like the Rev. Jesse Jackson, left, and the AFL-CIO's John Sweeney, center, labor and African-American voters turned out strongly for Gore. But those elements alone aren't enough to form a winning coalition.

voters as all minorities combined. And because there are many more conservatives than liberals in America, a new progressive majority will also require Democrats to win moderates by a substantial margin.

Gore failed to forge such a coalition. His populist message was well received by Democratic base voters, but its appeal to swing voters was limited. Gore won spectacularly among self-identified Democrats and among liberals — better even than Bill Clinton did in 1996. But at the same time, he lost key categories of swing voters that Clinton won.

Gore also won big among African-Americans and Hispanics. He won a solid, though not spectacular, majority of women. He won self-identified working-class voters and every category of voters with annual family incomes of less than $50,000. The problem is that the number of voters in those categories has declined significantly during the past four years. Gore also did very well among union households — a tribute to the hard work of AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and leaders of organized labor. Their get-out-the-vote efforts increased the percentage of voters from union households from 23 percent in 1996 to 26 percent in 2000, reversing decades of decline.

A Losing Coalition

Gore lost every income category of voters earning more than $50,000 a year — the most rapidly growing part of the electorate. Clinton won voters with annual incomes up to $75,000, including voters in the critical $50,000 to $75,000 category. Gore lost middle-class voters by one percent and upper-middle-class voters more substantially. And, interestingly, he won the far ends of the education spectrum — high school dropouts and voters with postgraduate degrees. But he lost every other group — high school graduates, voters with some college, and college graduates — leaving him with the have-nots and the elites, hardly a sustainable coalition.

" A new progressive majority in the first decade of the 21st century will require winning the middle class, not just the working class, and being competitive among the more affluent and educated upper-middle class. "

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"The assertion that Nader's marginal vote hurt Gore is not borne out by polling data. When exit pollers asked voters how they would have voted in a two-way race, Bush actually won by a point."

BRIDGING THE GENDER GAP: Democrats have successfully become the party of diversity, with one exception: white men. While Democrats must continue to win a majority of women, they must capture more of the white male vote to forge majorities.

Gore also lost white voters by 12 points, white men by a whopping 24 points, and even lost white women by one point (though because of his position in favor of choice, he won upper-income white women). He won moderates, but not by nearly enough — winning them by just eight points compared to Clinton's 24-point margin in 1996.

Most significantly, Gore lost key groups of swing voters associated with the New Economy. He lost voters who regularly use the Internet by two points; Clinton won them by nine. He lost wired workers and voters who invest in the stock market. In Penn's words, he lost the "new targets of the 2000 election, the New Economy workers — suburban, middle class males who have benefited from the growth of the economy."

There's a clear reason why: His anti-corporate populism and pro-government message resulted in his being viewed as a liberal advocate of big government. And that turned off key swing voters.

According to exit polls, 46 percent of the voters wanted the next president's policies to be more conservative than Clinton's; only 10 percent wanted them to be more liberal. But 43 percent of voters felt Gore was too liberal on the issues. Not surprisingly, they voted 91 percent for Bush. And, as has been the case in recent elections, a majority of voters (53 percent) said government should do less, not more. They, too, voted overwhelmingly for Bush.

Failed Populism

Though he has long been a leader in

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shaping technology policy, Gore ignored the New Economy in his election campaign, seldom even using the words. His populist slogan, "the people vs. the powerful," evoked the specter of class warfare. And he offered a laundry list of government programs, hardly even talking about his own superb effort to streamline government.

Proponents of Gore's strategy argue that it was aimed at winning support of downscale white working-class voters, whom they see as the electorate's critical swing voters. They argue that the strategy was a success — that it produced a "progressive majority" if you add the votes won by Ralph Nader to those that Gore won. They maintain that Gore lost not because of his populist, big government message but because of cultural and moral issues, fueled by resentment of President Clinton's behavior and by Gore's own personal shortcomings.

I think they're wrong on all counts. The assertion that Nader's marginal vote hurt Gore is not borne out by polling data. When exit pollers asked voters how they would have voted in a two-way race, Bush actually won by a point. That was better than he did with Nader in the race.

The Clinton Factor

As for President Clinton's impact on the race, I believe his job performance record helped the vice president more than his personal foibles hurt him. Clearly, the vice president's strategic decision to run at arm's length from the Clinton-Gore record was costly. An astonishing 65 percent of voters said the country was "on the right track," but Gore won just 61 percent of them, far below the 70 percent to 75 percent that incumbent party candidates normally win. That alone was enough to be the difference between a tie and a comfortable victory.

Voters clearly had concerns about Gore's honesty and trustworthiness, but they had equally severe concerns about Bush's competency and ability to deal with a world crisis. In the end, these two factors canceled each other out.

The question of cultural issues is more complicated. Cultural conservatives backed Bush overwhelmingly, but they were never likely to support a Democrat in the first place. Polling going back well before the Clinton impeachment has found a substantial body of cultural conservatives — even among self-identified Democrats — who almost always vote Republican. Veering to the right on cultural issues to win these voters would take a heavy toll among other Democrats and swing voters.

That, in the end, is the problem with a political strategy that mainly targets downscale working-class whites. The messages necessary to attract them — populist, class-warfare-oriented economics and cultural conservatism — are hardly popular with voters in the rising learning class. As I wrote in the Summer 2000 issue of *The New Democrat*, it's important for Democrats to win those working-class voters. They should be part of our party's base. But, as the demographics make clear, they are also a rapidly declining portion of the total electorate. The rising learning class, in contrast, is growing rapidly. And their preferred messages are growth-oriented economics, empowering government rather than big government, and cultural tolerance.

Two years ago, in the inaugural issue of BLUEPRINT, Will Marshall and I wrote that to complete the job of building a New Democratic majority, Democrats must continue to modernize their message to keep pace with a changing America. We outlined ten rules for Democrats to follow. They included these three: embrace the New Economy; replace class warfare with a politics of common aspiration; and replace top-down bureaucracies with an enabling government. Had the vice president's campaign offered a message that followed those rules, I have no doubt that he would have become the 43rd president of the United States.

And, if the Democratic candidate for president in 2004 offers a New Democrat message that incorporates those rules, I have no doubt that he or she will occupy the political center and be elected the 44th president of the United States. ■

"The vice president's strategic decision to run at arm's length from the Clinton-Gore record was costly. An astonishing 65 percent of voters said the country was 'on the right track,' but Gore won just 61 percent of them, far below the 70 percent to 75 percent that incumbent party candidates normally win."

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Revitalizing the party of ideas

By exchanging New Democrat principles for populism, Gore paid too high a political price.

MISSING A SURE BET: President Clinton's high approval ratings and a strong economy were among Gore's potential strengths. But he failed to capitalize on them, losing a chance to appeal to the rising learning class and the new constituency of wired workers, like those on next page.

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by Will Marshall

As campaign 2000 unfolded, it was widely assumed that Vice President Al Gore would run the third straight presidential race on the New Democrat themes that he and Bill Clinton rode to victory in 1992 and 1996. But the Gore campaign often looked and sounded like a throwback to the doomed Democratic campaigns of the 1980s, replete with vintage class warfare themes and narrowly tailored appeals to constituency groups. This backsliding from reform-minded centrism to interest group liberalism was a key factor in turning a race Gore should have won handily into a virtual tie.

To be sure, Gore voiced some key New Democrat themes: preserving fiscal discipline by paying down the national debt, support (though heavily qualified) for expanding trade, and a commitment to vigorous U.S. global leadership backed by a strong military. By last September, however, those themes had been overshadowed by Gore's business-bashing "populism" and a laundry list of poll-tested programs and promises aimed at specific slices of the electorate. Often these proposals had merit; seniors really do need a prescription drug benefit. But the campaign's inability to articulate any sense of public purpose larger than the expansion of government for the benefit of favored groups also reinforced George W. Bush's charge that Gore was really a big spending liberal — "Mondale with a surplus," in the tart description of one observer.

Where Clinton had spoken to broad middle-class aspirations and values, Gore framed his appeals to particular group interests. The Gore campaign Web site invited visitors to select from a list of interest or identity group affiliations, so that they could be steered quickly to custom-tailored proposals for that group. Campaign scheduling also reinforced the interest-group oriented message. Gore's unmodulated performance on the stump fed the damaging public perception that he "would say anything" to get elected.

The point here is not that Gore should have shunned the party's most loyal constituencies. No Democrat can win without their support, and no one can argue they did not do their job in 2000. But in an era of political parity, Democrats cannot build electoral majorities by narrow appeals to traditional constituency groups. To build a new progressive majority, Democrats must

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Will Marshall is president of the Progressive Policy Institute.

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"The strongest argument for a Gore presidency was the one that most voters already agreed with: America had made great progress on the Clinton-Gore watch and continued to move in the right direction."

THE PRICE OF POPULISM: Gore's us-versus-them rhetoric sounded more scripted than sincere — or relevant. While appealing to some voters, it badly backfired with others. The doomsday message made the VP sound like he was running against his own successful record.

appeal both to their base and to new constituencies — wired workers, Gen Xers, suburban women and independents — on the basis of crosscutting ideas and values.

When the Gore campaign finally hit upon an overarching theme, "fighting for the people, not the powerful," it had a contrived feel. It's the sort of line campaign consultants love because it gets a strong response in focus groups. It didn't appear to grow naturally out of Gore's political biography or a considered analysis of the structural inequities of American capitalism. Indeed, Gore's combative "populism" was jarringly out of sync with a population basically satisfied with the country's direction and heartily sick of partisan warfare. It was also confusing: When an incumbent with a strong record adopts the rhetoric of an insurgent, he gives the impression of running against himself. "The biggest problem," lamented one Gore campaign aide, "was that our message didn't fit our policy."

After all, the strongest argument for a Gore presidency was the one that most voters already agreed with: America had made great progress on the Clinton-Gore watch and continued to move in the right direction. Gore was instrumental in shaping the policies that helped restore fiscal discipline, spur the emergence of an explosively inventive New Economy, produce the longest and strongest economic expansion in memory, reduce violent crime and welfare dependency, and create a relatively stable international environment in which

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American interests and values have rarely been more secure. In the end, the strength of these fundamentals came achingly close to overcoming an ill-conceived and ill-executed presidential campaign. But not close enough — and Democrats who wonder how victory slipped from their hands must now assess the costs of that failure.

In exchanging a winning New Democrat message for a faux populism and narrow appeals to interest groups, the Gore campaign lost the political ground his party had gained during the last decade along five critical philosophical dimensions: the role of government, economic opportunity, civic responsibility, mainstream values, and security.

Big Government vs. Enabling Government

Bush's success in hanging the albatross of "big government" around Gore's neck set back efforts by New Democrats over the last decade to identify their party with a less centralized and bureaucratic model for public activism. Clinton famously declared that "the era of big government is over," and Gore himself led the administration's "reinventing government" initiative that produced the smallest federal bureaucracy since the early 1960s.

On the campaign trail, however, the vice president offered few new ideas for reforming government and plenty of proposals for expanding it. Take education, a top public concern in 2000. Voters are dissatisfied with the quality of public education and strongly support national tests, ending social promotion, and other measures to raise student performance. While Democrats usually dominate the issue, exit polls showed the party had only a modest 52 percent to 44 percent edge over the GOP on improving education. Bush gained ground by blurring differences: He too called for more federal aid to schools, although considerably less than Gore. Crucially, however, he stressed holding schools accountable for lifting students to higher standards and narrowing the achievement gap between poor and middle-class students.

Of course, many of Gore's spending proposals were popular. And voters gave him the advantage on most of the individual issues they deemed important, from preserving Social Security to debt reduction to prescription drug benefits. But the cumulative impact of the Gore message was to lend credence to Bush's criticism of the vice president as both a big spender and a defender of the status quo in government.

Social Security offers a case in point. Since Social Security has traditionally been a "third rail" for politicians — touch it and you die — Bush took a considerable gamble in proposing that workers be allowed to use part of their payroll tax to create private savings accounts they control and own. The vice president rightly took Bush to task for failing to tell voters how we would make up the Social Security revenue diverted to private accounts. But Gore's attempts to paint "privatization" as a mortal threat to Social Security proved less persuasive. Voters favored private accounts by a solid 57 percent to 39 percent margin, prompting pollster John Zogby to remark that "the third rail has been broken."

When asked which candidate would demand more accountability from government as well as more personal responsibility, voters picked Bush. Among Bush voters, 41 percent cited his philosophy of smaller, better government as the main reason for voting for him. Voters believed Gore held the more traditionally liberal view that the government's role is to protect people and solve problems for them rather than the New Democrat view that government should equip people with the tools to tackle their own problems.

In the end, Bush's anti-government populism trumped Gore's anti-corporate populism. For Democrats, the lesson is clear: More spending may please the party's pro-government constituencies, but the broader public also expects structural reforms to improve government's performance. To restore public confidence in progressive government, progressives must be unrelenting in their determination to revive government's capacity to solve problems.

Class Warfare vs. Economic Growth

The Democrats' biggest political achievement of the past decade was restoring their

"For Democrats, the lesson is clear: More spending may please the party's pro-government constituencies, but the broader public also expects structural reforms to improve goverment's performance."

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reputation as the party of economic growth and expanding opportunity. After a decades-long detour into the politics of wealth redistribution in the name of "fairness," Democrats finally rebuilt their credibility as the party of sound fiscal and economic management and general prosperity.

Yet Gore failed to frame the 2000 debate as a referendum on the nation's remarkable economic progress. And he undermined his own comparative advantage on economic issues by reverting to old class warfare themes that villainized U.S. corporations and cast working families as victims. One problem with this strategy is that most Americans don't feel like victims. According to Penn's Poll, 79 percent of the public thinks the economy is headed in the right direction and a solid majority says they are better off now than they were eight years ago.

"Gore undermined his own comparative advantage on economic issues by reverting to old class warfare themes that villainized U.S. corporations and cast working families as victims."

The limits of class warfare were evident in the Gore campaign's attack on the centerpiece of Bush's economic plan, a $1.3 trillion tax cut over 10 years. The vice president rightly pointed out that the Bush plan would perversely redistribute wealth up the income scale. But Democrats should have been equally concerned with the plan's likely economic impact. Prominent economists from Alan Greenspan on down warned that a massive tax cut could promote consumption rather than investment, overheat the economy, fuel pressure for interest rate hikes, leave America saddled with large debt servicing costs, and gobble up most if not all of the projected fiscal surplus — in short, put screeching brakes on the long-booming economy and hit the middle class right in its wallet.

In the end, Gore's "fighting for you" populism may have thrilled upscale liberals, but it failed to sway the voters to whom it was primarily aimed: white working-class men and women. According to liberal political analyst Ruy Teixera, Bush won white working-class households with incomes of less than $75,000 a year by 13 points, and noncollege whites by 17 points. Gore also lost among the "wired workers" who now make up fully a quarter of the electorate and who are decidedly more upbeat about the nation's economic prospects.

The emergence of the New Economy has been the biggest story in America in recent years. But it was conspicuously absent in the campaign debate. It is especially surprising that Gore shied away from the subject, since no national leader has peered deeper into how technology is reshaping our economic lives and the social implications of these changes. New Democrats should embrace the New Economy, which has generated strong productivity and wage gains in the last five years and is beginning to reverse the two-decade trend toward growing economic inequality. To build electoral majorities in the future, the party must appeal to New Economy entrepreneurs and knowledge workers who have little use for the old left-right debate and are looking for a political home.

Entitlement vs. Civic Responsibility

Civic responsibility was another key New Democratic theme that went absent without leave in 2000. In the late 1980s, New Democrats called for a new balance between citizen rights and responsibilities and advanced national service as a way to revive the slumbering spirit of civic obligation. Clinton carried the theme into the 1992 election, promising an end to government policies that offered "something for nothing" and challenging citizens who receive public benefits to give something back to the community.

The politics of civic reciprocity — of expanding opportunity while also demanding more personal responsibility — shaped not only Clinton's AmeriCorps national service plan, but also his plan to "end welfare as we know it." It said that public assistance should not be a permanent entitlement but an earned benefit conditioned on peoples' willingness to work and contribute to the common pot. This shift from welfare paternalism to mutual responsibility helped to realign Democrats with most Americans' understanding of the social bargain. It also helped Clinton win the presidency twice.

In the 2000 race, however, Gore seldom invoked the ethic of civic responsibility or challenged Americans to do anything but receive new blessings from government. An

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SOCCER MOMS OR WAITRESS MOMS? Gore accepted the claim that working-class whites were the key to a winning coalition. His corporate-bashing and class warfare themes alienated middle-class suburbanites.

emblematic moment came during a presidential debate, when a single, 34-year-old woman asked the candidates what their campaign proposals would do for her. Gore responded with a lucid litany of new programs from which the questioner might benefit — though no one thought to ask why she needed government's help in the first place.

Looking ahead, Democrats must recapture the themes of civic reciprocity and self-reliant citizenship. One way is to call for a dramatic expansion of national service, so that more young Americans can be exposed to opportunities to serve their communities in return for college aid. Another is to focus more on the contributions that civic and faith-based institutions can make in solving our social problems — a theme Gore broached in a thoughtful speech last June but seldom returned to in the general campaign.

Mainstream Values vs. Cultural Relativism

From Richard Nixon in 1968 to the elder George Bush's 1988 campaign, Republicans practiced a brutally effective wedge politics that divided the New Deal coalition, pitting working middle-class voters against liberal elites and minorities on such issues as crime, affirmative action, family breakdown, welfare dependency, and sexual permissiveness.

New Democrats set out to realign their party with mainstream social and cultural values. Styling himself a "different kind of Democrat," Clinton in 1992 called for replacing welfare with work, stemming the tide

"Democrats must recapture the themes of civic reciprocity and self-reliant citizenship. One way is to call for a dramatic expansion of national service, so that more young Americans can be exposed to opportunities to serve their communities in return for college aid."

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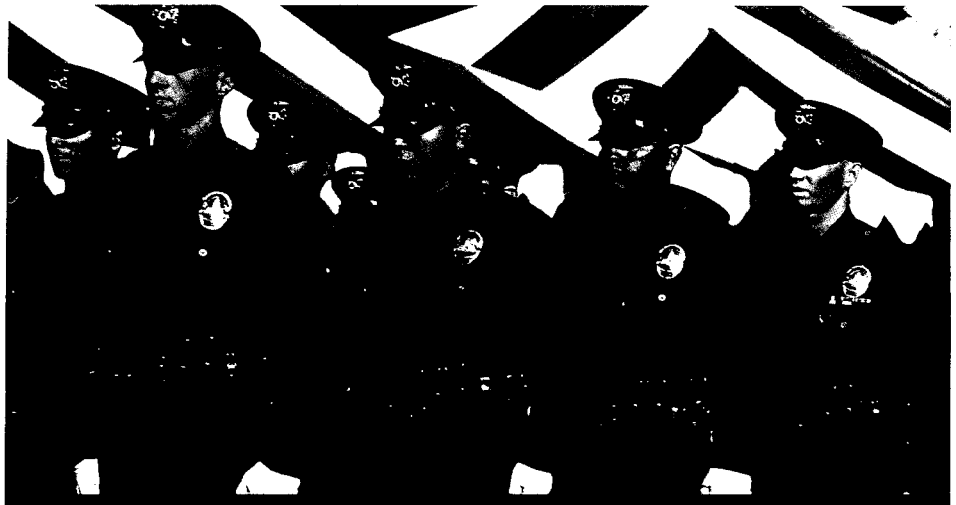

LINGERING DOUBTS: Despite the Clinton-Gore administration's success in putting 100,000 new cops on the streets, Republicans still had an advantage when it came to the "masculine" issues: crime and national security. Gore could have emphasized the success of the administration's community-policing efforts.

"Government's role, economic progress, civic responsibility, mainstream values, and personal and national security — in these five areas Gore failed to build on New Democrats' success in modernizing the party's governing agenda."

of teen pregnancy and out-of-wedlock births, and reinforcing the police in their "unequal struggle" against crime. He backed abortion rights but disappointed pro-choice absolutists by saying that abortions should be "safe, legal, and rare."

On the inflammable issue of race, Clinton also struck a moderate tone. While championing diversity, he dispensed with the old language of racial victimization. Speaking in black churches in Memphis in 1993, Clinton memorably argued that society's moral obligation to help poor minority communities "from the outside in" must be matched by a revival of personal responsibility and moral leadership from "the inside out." He spoke more candidly than liberal politicians about the scourge of juvenile crime and family breakdown in black communities. Acknowledging that racial and gender preferences sometimes go too far, he promised in 1995 to "mend, not end" affirmative action.

The shifts on crime, race, and other polarizing issues, along with New Democrats' stress on personal responsibility, helped to realign the party with mainstream moral sentiments. By 1996, Bob Dole's attempts to resurrect the old hot button issues fell flat.

In 2000, however, Gore's rhetoric often evoked the stark divisions of the past. Where Clinton had a fine ear for nuance and acknowledged voters' ambivalence on issues like group preferences, abortion, gay marriage, and gun control, Gore tended to draw bright lines and deploy "us vs. them" invective. Gore's social liberalism may have helped him with some voters but appears to have hurt him with white men, whom he lost by 24 points compared to Clinton's 11-point loss in 1996. Voters also saw Gore more as a liberal than a moderate; in fact, he was seen as more liberal than the Democratic Party itself. Gore's positions on social and cultural issues probably cost him dearly in the 11 states that he lost in 2000 but that Clinton won in 1996, including West Virginia, Arkansas, and his own home state of Tennessee.

Rather than take sides in the cultural wars, Democrats should seek common ground based on shared civic values. Rejecting both the right's coercive moralism and the left's relativism and identity groupthink, the party should embrace what scholar William Galston has called a "tolerant traditionalism" that respects differences while honoring mainstream values of work, family, individual responsibility, and self-reliance.

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Personal and National Security

Finally, there were two notable exceptions to the Democrats' advantage on specific issues: crime and national security. In fairness to Team Gore, the Republicans seem to have begun the 2000 campaign with a built-in advantage on these concerns, the legacy of decades of GOP "get tough" rhetoric on crime and support for high levels of defense spending, as well as Clinton's uneasy relationship with the military. Although crime and defense were less salient in 2000 than in previous elections, the GOP's lock on white men is no doubt linked to its image of strength on these prototypically "masculine" issues.

Nonetheless, the Gore campaign could have made a stronger case that New Democrat innovations aimed at preventing crime have been more effective than the GOP's traditional fixation on punishment after the fact. The Clinton-Gore administration's "100,000 cops" initiative not only put more police on the streets, it also carved out an important new role for Washington as a catalyst for innovative law enforcement strategies such as community-oriented policing. By combining a no-nonsense approach to criminals with commonsense efforts to foster cooperation between the police and communities to tackle conditions that breed crime, the New Democrat approach helped break the political deadlock between "root cause" liberals and "lock 'em up" conservatives.

While Republicans can no longer credibly accuse Democrats of being "soft on defense," they evidently enjoy lingering if unearned credibility on questions of national strength and resolve. After all, it was Gore, not Bush, who possessed sterling credentials and wide experience in Clinton-Gore diplomacy and the great national security debates of the past two decades. Yet Gore declined to exploit his huge comparative advantage, rarely addressing international issues on the stump to the consternation of his foreign policy team.

Democrats must avoid the trap of treating national security as a natural GOP issue and the military itself as a Republican interest group. That would only deepen an already wide chasm between the mores of the professional military and the society it defends. Moreover, GOP military policy since 1994 has been an unwholesome mix of pork barrel politics and "go-it-alone" unilateralism that demands huge investments in unproven national missile defense systems and opposes international efforts, like the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, to stem the proliferation of nuclear weapons and missiles. In contrast to the GOP's cramped and insular nationalism, Democrats should embrace a progressive internationalism that combines energetic U.S. global leadership with unequivocal support for a strong military capable of projecting power around the world.

Generating Ideas for a New Progressive Majority

Government's role, economic progress, civic responsibility, mainstream values, and personal and national security — in these five areas Gore failed to build on New Democrats' success in modernizing the party's governing agenda and occupying the "vital center." Instead, Democrats seemed to revert to type — and lost an election they should have won.

Above all, Democrats need to take two lessons away from the fumbled opportunity of 2000. First, the party must not return to the micro-politics of the 1970s and 1980s, in which it subdivided its message to woo a myriad of cause-oriented activists and interest groups. Second, to be competitive in today's evenly divided politics, Democrats must remain intellectually dynamic. They must be the party of new ideas to equip Americans for the challenges of the New Economy, not guardians of the old economic order.

This of course will cause friction with traditional constituencies that fear economic and political change. But, as the Clinton-Gore success showed, those frictions are manageable. It's better for the party to have an honest and respectful debate than to unify behind worn-out ideologies, obsolete programs, failing public systems, and interest group litmus tests. New Democrats' task after 2000 is the same as it was before 1992: generating new ideas for advancing the party's enduring values — ideas for a new progressive majority. ■

"To be competitive in today's evenly divided politics, Democrats must remain intellectually dynamic. They must be the party of new ideas to equip Americans for the challenges of the New Economy, not guardians of the old economic order."

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Change the message!

How Democrats can win in the suburbs and regain the House of Representatives.

by Rep. Adam Smith

For the fourth national election in a row, Democrats failed to win the U.S. House of Representatives. In the bargain we lost the White House and didn't recapture the U.S. Senate. Pundits and party officials have found a plethora of reasons to explain why: We were outspent, there was "Clinton fatigue," there was the Nader factor, Gore was simply a bad candidate.

Instead of trying to spin our way out of this defeat, however, we should critically analyze its causes, then make the necessary changes to take back the majority and advance the policies that are best for our country.

I believe we lost because party officials, interest group leaders, and national campaign consultants pushed a message that didn't work, especially in the suburban swing districts that are the battleground for control of Congress. After four consecutive losses to the likes of Newt Gingrich and Tom DeLay, we need to improve our message — and our policy agenda — if we are to regain the majority.

The national message has four fatal flaws: It is far too reliant on the role of government; it does not recognize the changing economic and social realities in our country; it is too partisan; and it is excessively loyal to interest groups.

This national message is based on a promise for more government and a promise to fight Republican cuts in government. In 1994, the Democrats lost their congressional majority to Republicans who promised to dramatically shrink the size of the federal government. In 1996, the Democrats attacked the Republicans for those government cuts, primarily in health care, education, and environmental protection. Despite the often horrible public policy that was pushed by the Republican congressional majority, Democrats still didn't take back either house.

In 1998 and 2000, we simultaneously attacked the Republicans for cuts to government programs and advocated more government. Democrats pushed for more regulation of health care through a "patients' bill of rights" and regulation to protect our privacy. We argued for more government spending for prescription drugs, universal preschool, education, skills training, school construction — the list goes on.

This was the national Democrats' message in 2000. The people in charge of that message urged all Democratic candidates to adopt it and spread it themselves through television, mail, free media, and speeches on the floors of the House and Senate. This big-government message could not have been better presented than it was in 2000. It had popular issues like privacy protection and access to prescription medication for seniors. The various Democratic organizations raised more money than they ever had in previous elections. The party united around the message and, for the most part, articulated it with great enthusiasm and clarity.

It didn't work. We lost.

It wasn't that the people opposed access to prescription medication, privacy protection, more funding for education and health care, or a patients' bill of rights. The failure occurred because the Democratic Party didn't even begin to address the objections voters have to our party's

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RISING VOTERS: Explosive suburban growth, like in these communities around Seattle, is generating new kinds of voters: wired workers, the rising learning class, affluent and educated Americans who favor a reciprocal civic responsibility. Democrats must direct their message to these new constituencies.

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message, the ones that caused them to toss us out of power in the first place. Once again Democrats made it painfully easy for our Republican opponents to sum up the race as a choice between bigger government and smaller government. When that is the choice, Democrats will lose.

While voters support programs like those mentioned above, they continue to worry about government's being too big and too inefficient. They're concerned about high taxes, a lack of fiscal responsibility by government, government programs that produce dependence instead of personal responsibility, and regulations that show no concern for how they affect the ability of businesses to create good jobs and a strong economy. Nowhere in the national Democratic message were any of these issues addressed. The people will not put Democrats back in power, no matter how badly the Republicans perform, until these issues are addressed.

Bill Clinton understood this. That's why he promised to end welfare as we knew it, to balance the budget, to cut taxes, and to stand up to traditional Democratic Party interest groups when necessary to advocate this agenda. He also talked about education and health care and more traditional Democratic programs, but he knew he had to address the core concerns the public had about Democrats. He did, and he won twice. Some combination of this approach must become a central part of the national Democratic Party's message in congressional elections if we hope to mirror President Clinton's success.

"Our national message also fails to recognize the changing face of America. More people than ever invest in the stock market, believe in opening markets overseas, and understand the New Economy. Our policies must reflect this."

Our national message also fails to recognize the changing face of America. More people than ever invest in the stock market, believe in opening markets overseas, and understand the New Economy. Our policies must reflect this. More Americans want a "trampoline" to help them rebound when out of work than a "safety net" to simply catch them when they fall. People are looking for government to provide opportunity, not by simply creating government programs, but by setting the stage for a strong economy and creating the tools people need to help themselves.

Although at least a third of the electorate is essentially nonpartisan, the national Democratic message is too focused on finding "contrast" with Republicans and emphasizing partisanship. Yes, politics is about choices and differences, but our message has focused on partisan differences at the expense of common sense and problem solving, thereby alienating the independent voters who decide elections. The popularity of Jesse Ventura and John McCain, politicians who will "tell it like it is" regardless of party affiliation, has been lost on the Democratic political operation. While the Republican leadership is as partisan as they come, George W. Bush and his operatives seized on the American people's frustrations with partisanship and used it to great effect with swing voters.

Penn's Poll in this issue demonstrates this. George W. Bush's promise to end partisan bickering and bring a new tone to Washington had the greatest resonance with voters. Seventy-nine percent said this message would make them more likely to vote for a candidate, and 46 percent said it would make them much more likely to do so. This message resonates particularly well with independent voters, voters earning from $30,000 to $50,000 (a group Clinton did well with and Gore did not), and the voters who made up their minds right before the election.

This leads to the fourth fatal flaw in the national Democratic message: a degeneration into interest-group politics. Swing voters still see Democrats as too often being a collection of interest groups to be coddled and kept happy instead of a party with a clear vision for the future of our entire country.

Control of Congress rests in the suburban swing districts, which can only grow in number and importance after the 2001 redistricting. That's where Democrats have been losing elections. But it doesn't have to be that way. I come from one of these districts and I beat a Republican incumbent in 1996 — and have since won re-election twice with more than 60 percent of the vote. I did this by running on an agenda that didn't just promise more government. I ran instead on the broader agenda outlined in this article. I focused intensely on showing voters that I was one Democrat who understood that government could get too big and should be more efficient, responsible, and effective.

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NEW ECONOMY ON HIGH: Despite market bumps, the New Economy is the engine of American growth. Seventy percent of voters are invested in the stock market.

Other Democrats have done the same: Reps. Ellen Tauscher of California, Darlene Hooley of Oregon, Tim Roemer of Indiana, and Dennis Moore of Kansas have all worked hard to offer the right Democratic message in their swing districts and have been successful. The 2000 victories of New Democrats such as Brad Carson in Oklahoma, Jim Matheson in Utah, Adam Schiff in California, and Rick Larsen in Washington demonstrate that the future of our party is in the candidates who embrace this message. They showed their constituents that they have a common sense agenda that focuses on promoting responsibility, expanding opportunity, and building community. While expanding Medicare to include prescription drugs and investing in education is critically important, fiscal responsibility and government efficiency must also be cornerstones of our agenda. Support for more local flexibility in education, charter schools, tax cuts to help family-owned businesses and middle class Americans, and promoting the New Economy are also elements that many successful centrist candidates use to demonstrate to swing voters that they are not reflexively partisan and will seek common sense solutions to problems.

Despite the success of these candidates, it's clear from the 2000 election that our party as a whole hasn't yet learned its lessons, while the Republicans are obviously starting to learn theirs. Republicans who very recently ran on eliminating the Department of Education or slashing government have now become "compassionate conservatives." They say they care about prescription drugs and education just as much as Democrats do. Republicans are starting to rid themselves of the monkey on their back — intolerance and a reflexive opposition to government. But we Democrats have not done the same. And if we've been losing to a Gingrich-dominated, ideologically conservative Republican Party, how will we do when faced with a kinder, gentler Republican Party (even if only in its message)? Losing can be cathartic. Democrats need to learn from the successes of these congressional races and the failures of Al Gore and our national message; we should adopt more of these New Democrat ideas and policies as a part of our national message. It is my fear that there will be heavy pressure to drift further to the left and adopt the Green Party's anti-business, anti-capitalist approach and insist on party unity to oppose any and all Republican proposals. While this may be the easiest thing to do and will provide the "contrast" with Republicans that some in our caucus and party prioritize, it would also cause Democrats to go the way of the British Labour Party in the 1980s. The American public simply does not agree that our nation needs to bash corporations and expand the government, and the American public is absolutely right.

We need to come to grips with the changes that have occurred in this country. We must learn how to harness the power of both the private sector and the government to offer our people the opportunity to have the best quality of life possible. I want to see our party successfully governing again, so that we can solve problems and provide opportunity to all Americans. I fear that without dramatic changes, we won't ever have the chance to do so. ■

"It's clear from the 2000 election that our party as a whole hasn't yet learned its lessons, while the Republicans are obviously starting to learn theirs. Republicans who very recently ran on eliminating the Department of Education or slashing government have now become 'compassionate conservatives'."

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Turning a win into a draw

by Mark J. Penn

Gore's populist message worked well with the Democratic base, but fell far short with swing voters who could have pushed him over the top. By failing to talk about the Clinton administration's economic achievements, Gore lost a golden opportunity to win the huge number of citizens who felt that the country was "on the right track."

In a time of unprecedented peace and prosperity, the 2000 presidential election was Al Gore's to lose. As the sitting vice president, Gore should have won by 55 percent to 45 percent in the view of many political observers. Yet the election was decided by fewer than 1,000 votes in Florida. Nationally, each candidate won 48 percent of the vote. How did this happen? That's the question we set out to answer in a poll conducted by Penn, Schoen and Berland Associates on November 11-12, 2000. We interviewed 1,200 Americans who voted in the presidential election.

The highlights of the survey include:

- While Al Gore won on the individual issues of the campaign, he **lost on the broader meta-themes** of the election. George W. Bush's central messages of smaller government and of changing the tone in Washington were able to overcome his deficiency on the issues and position him closer to the center, at least rhetorically. The vice president failed to build on President Clinton's winning formula of fiscal responsibility and support for a smaller, activist government. Consequently, Gore was vulnerable to attacks as an old-style, big-government liberal like Michael Dukakis — the very image that brought down Dukakis in his 1988 race against Bush's father.
- Instead of running as a New Economy Democrat, Al Gore **used an old-style populism** that reduced his appeal rather than expanded it. The message prevented him from reaching the swing voters who could have pushed him over the top. Gore narrowly won the popular vote with this message by piling up large wins in states like California, where extra votes fail to count. But the message sent him tumbling backward in key border states, in his home state and, finally, in the electoral college. Liberal positions on social issues along

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Research and polling assistance provided by Jeff Epstein.

Full results of this poll can be found at www.ndol.org/blueprint.

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LOSING BY ONE VOTE: By missing the new voter constituencies, Gore ended up deadlocked with Bush at 48 percent each. This put him in the position of fighting over chads, recounts, and court decisions. In the end, it came down to one court, one decision, and one vote — the 5-4 Supreme Court split that stopped the Florida recount.

with populism and big government positions took what could have been a substantial win and turned it into a draw. Had Gore combined his positions of conscience on social issues with a new vision of the role of government, he would have carried a larger percentage of upwardly mobile, socially tolerant suburban men that would have helped him win.

- While the vice president realized he had to reach the 1996 targets of soccer moms, **he missed the new target of the 21st century** — the wired workers. The last group of voters Al Gore could have reached were the those who finally chose Bush in the campaign's final month — primarily middle class, white suburban males, many of whom had voted for Clinton in the past. While Gore did well with better-educated, higher-income, pro-choice white women, he performed poorly among upscale white men — 20 percent of the electorate. In our poll, they voted against him by 29 percent to 57 percent. They were attracted to Bush's message of smaller government and greater economic freedom; they were turned off by populism. In the next election, Democrats need to own the New Economy and the new bargain for success that these workers seek. This new bargain includes proposals like pension portability and health care portability.

- **Only sporadically did Al Gore talk about progress, prosperity**, and the Clinton administration's achievements on the economy. This message could have been Gore's greatest asset, but he resisted it. Though he stood atop one of the greatest Democratic achievements since Franklin Roosevelt — an economic boom, a balanced budget, government surpluses — he failed to use it effectively. Fully 34 percent of those voting for Gore said progress and prosperity was the top reason they voted for him; but 41 percent of Bush supporters named a smaller, better government as their top reason for choosing their candidate. If Gore had used progress and prosperity consistently rather than sporadically, he would have achieved far greater clarity with voters and would have won more of those voters who said things were moving "on the right track." Gore won about 60 percent of "right track" voters. In 1996, Clinton won 69 percent of "right track" voters — a 9 percent difference that would easily have given Gore the election.

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- **Both candidates failed to occupy the decisive center** of the American electorate. This is not surprising given the failure of either candidate to break 50 percent. Voters see Gore as substantially left of center and Bush as right of center. By running as a social and big government liberal, Gore was perceived as being to the left of the Democratic Party. In contrast, Bush was viewed as being more to the center than the Republican Party; that was perhaps the single most important element of his success.
- **Now the tables are turned, and it is Bush who must reach out to Gore's voters to build a new coalition of support or he will fail in governing.** Bush must now put together a coalition greater than the 48 percent he received. The voters Bush needs to reach are the DLC Democrats — concerned about the size of government, but firmly committed to progress on major issues like health care, education, family, and crime. They want government that will give people the tools they need to succeed in the 21st century. They are looking for a president and Congress that will continue the job started by President Clinton.

The Poll

Putting Issues Into a Broader Framework

Al Gore won the voters who cared most about the specific issues he ran on. Overall, he won voters who cared about the issues 52 percent to 34 percent. He won voters who were most concerned about education, health care, the economy, preserving Social Security, Medicare, and the environment.

Bush on the other hand won both the most conservative voters and voters concerned about taxes, balancing the budget, drugs, and defense. Gore lost those who cared about "guns" but tied with those who cared about "juvenile shootings."

Issues Gore won	Gore/Bush Vote
Preserving Social Security	54/37
Education	56/33
Health care	66/18
Economy	73/16
Preserving Medicare	60/31
Environment	85/2
Juvenile violence/school shootings	51/49

Issues Bush won	Gore/Bush Vote
Taxes	23/67
Gun laws/gun control	16/73
Balancing the budget	46/54
Drugs	20/47
Military/national defense/security	13/60

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Gore won 50,996,116 votes in the 2000 presidential election...

The key to Clinton's New Democratic coalition in 1996 was combining a vision of smaller government with greater government activism. Here Gore's message fell apart and Bush successfully captured the issue on the right role for government in the 21st century. Gore may have won on the issues, but he lost on the philosophy for implementing prescription drugs, reforming Social Security and improving education.

Q. Which of the following is the most important reason you voted for Bush?

	All
His philosophy of smaller, better government	41
His leadership style	19
Did not like Al Gore	14
His support for an across the board tax cut	11
His record of success in Texas	9
Other	2
Don't know	2
All of the above	2

Defining Your Own Ideology

The vice president came into the election with strong centrist credentials; over the course of the campaign Bush successfully portrayed Gore's philosophy of government as one of big government and excessive spending. The ideological divide played itself out among the voters on Election Day and accounted for a big difference between Clinton and Gore's performances. Gore captured moderates by 8 points, winning 52 percent of them, while Clinton captured moderates by 24 points, winning 57 percent of them in 1996. One of the causes for such a shift is that Gore is seen as the candidate for big government by 60 percent to 24 percent over Bush. Among those who say Gore is a candidate of big government, Bush won 69 percent to 28 percent.

Q. Does this apply more to Gore or Bush?

	Gore	Bush	Gore Margin
Is for big government	60	24	36
Is for reforming government programs	40	45	-5
Is for protecting government programs	70	16	54

We asked voters to think about their own ideological leanings as well as those of the candidates. On a scale of 1 to 9, with 1 being far left, 5 being absolute center, and 9 being far right, the mean response for how people see their own ideology is 5.42 — slightly to the right of center. When ranking the candidates on the same scale, voters view Al Gore as left of center, scoring an average of 3.92. This score is more than 1 point left of absolute center, and 1.5 left of the average voter. Among several key voting groups, Gore is seen as even farther left. Among wired workers, for example, Gore averages 3.58, almost 1.7 points left of center for that group. Among those with an annual household income of $50,000-$75,000, Gore also averages 3.72, over 1.7 left of center. Among Bush swing voters who decided in the last month for Bush, Gore rates a 3.55, over 2 points left of center.

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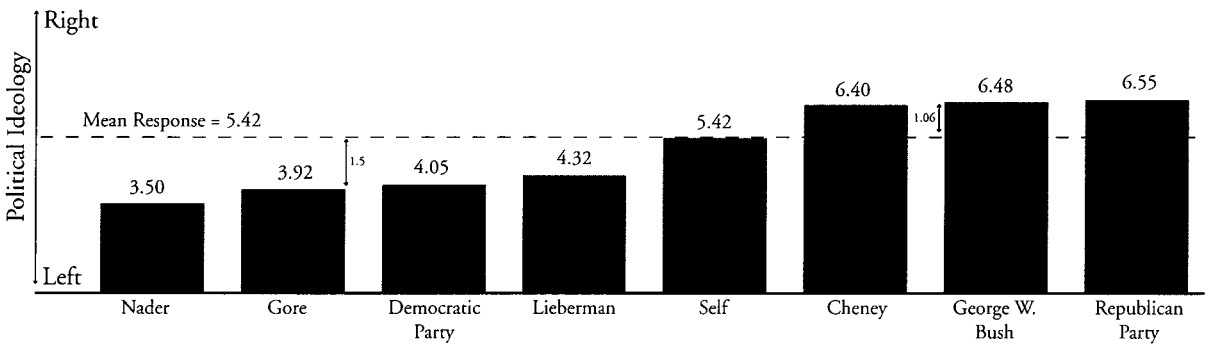
Bush is perceived as right of center by about 1.5 points — 6.48 — but that still leaves him more closely aligned with most voters than Gore. Since Americans on average see themselves as somewhat right of center, the gap between Bush and the voters is only slightly over 1 point — closer than Gore's gap of 1.5 left of center.

But while Bush is seen as a moderating element in his party, Gore is seen as to the left of his party — despite his years as a centrist Democrat in the House, the Senate, and the vice presidency. Gore's departure from the center drove up these numbers. In contrast, Gore's choice of New Democrat Joe Lieberman as his running mate was ideologically in tune with the voters.

Q. On a scale of 1-9, with 1 being far left, 5 being the absolute center, and 9 being far right, please tell me where your / the following people's political views stand?



Avg. Political Ideology	All	Gore	Bush	Ind	Bush Swing
Ralph Nader	3.50	3.77	3.17	3.40	3.23
Al Gore	3.92	4.67	3.13	3.80	3.55
Democratic Party	4.05	4.74	3.28	3.92	3.72
Joe Lieberman	4.32	4.90	3.63	4.31	4.14
Self	**5.42**	**4.77**	**6.19**	**5.05**	**5.79**
Dick Cheney	6.40	6.12	6.78	6.59	6.66
George W. Bush	6.48	6.29	6.76	6.66	6.71
Republican Party	6.55	6.25	6.92	6.83	6.69

The substantial gaps between personal and candidate ideology do matter when voters decide which way to cast their ballots. Those who rated their own ideology and Al Gore's ideology the same voted overwhelmingly for Gore, 77 percent to 10 percent. Similarly, those who rated Bush's ideology as identical to their own voted for Bush by a count of 75 percent to 14 percent.

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Not only does it pay for a candidate to be perceived as ideologically close to his or her voters, but it is beneficial for a candidate to be perceived as centrist. Among those who said Gore was an absolute centrist (a 5 on the scale), 70 percent voted for Gore and 12 percent for Bush. And among those who viewed Bush as an absolute centrist, 61percent voted for Bush, 20 percent for Gore.

Among the 41percent who say they voted for Bush because he was for smaller, better government, Gore earned a mean political ideology score of 3.04, significantly more to the left of the score he earned among the electorate as a whole. These voters gave Bush a 6.69 mean political ideology score, only slightly more conservative than he earned overall. This shows that Bush's ability to communicate his belief in smaller; better government was instrumental in attracting non-urban male voters, many of whom decided for Bush as Election Day approached.

Ideology and the Role of Government

In a series of questions about the role of the federal government, respondents were presented with three positions representing a liberal, a centrist, and a conservative viewpoint. They were asked to choose the position that they agreed with, that they thought Gore agreed with, and that they thought Bush agreed with.

Over half (54 percent) said that the proper role of the federal government is to help people equip themselves to solve their own problems, a viewpoint consistent with polling from 1999. The liberal perspective is held by 14 percent who support government solving problems and protecting people, and 28 percent who support keeping government out of people's lives. On the role of government, it is better to be right than left, a premise that is consistent with our fall 1999 conjoint analysis. When asked where Al Gore stood on this continuum, 48 percent attributed the liberal positioning to him, 35 percent the centrist positioning. Among those who said he was left on this issue, Bush wins 62 percent to 28 percent. But among those who see Gore as centrist on the role of government, Gore wins handily, 65 percent to 20 percent.

By comparison, Bush did not capture the center on this issue, but he was seen as right of center. Forty percent attributed the centrist positioning on the role of government to Bush, while 41 percent the conservative positioning. More evidence that Bush did not occupy the center is that Independents and those earning $50,000-$75,000 granted neither Gore nor Bush the center on this issue. Wired workers, however, do view Bush as occupying the center on the role of government, while a majority (54 percent) view Gore as left.

Q. Which is closest to your own / George W. Bush's / Al Gore's view on role of the federal government?

	Self	Bush	Gore
Government should solve problems and protect people from adversity.	14	11	48
Government should equip people to solve their own problems.	54	40	35
Government should stay out of people's lives so they can solve their problems without interference or regulation.	28	41	9

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Q. Which is closest to your own / George W. Bush's / Al Gore's view on role of the federal government? Among wired workers:

	Self	Gore	Bush
Government should solve problems and protect people from adversity.	10	54	12
Government should help people equip themselves to solve their own problems.	60	36	46
Government should stay out of people's lives so they can solve their problems without interference or regulation.	28	8	38

A similar dynamic exists on the subject of the role of government in terms of economics. A majority (55 percent) holds the centrist position that government should spur economic growth and create opportunity for all Americans. On either end of the spectrum, about 20 percent of the electorate takes opposite positions: One side says government should spend on social programs to make sure we don't leave anyone to fend for themselves; the other side says government should stay out of the economy altogether. Still, neither Gore nor Bush occupies the decisive center. Forty-five percent place Gore to the left of center, 38 percent in the center. Forty-four percent place Bush to the right of center, 34 percent the center.

Q. Which is closest to your own / George W. Bush's / Al Gore's view on role of the federal government in terms of economics?

	Self	Bush	Gore
Government should spend on social programs where necessary, because America is not about leaving everyone to fend for themselves.	19	13	45
Government should focus on spurring economic growth and creating opportunity for all Americans.	55	34	38
Government should stay out of the economy altogether so private forces can compete and create jobs.	20	44	9

Populism Has its Limits

To understand the impact of the themes utilized by each campaign and the relative strength of the populist appeal, three of the most common threads from each candidate's speeches were tested, along with some other potential centrist themes. Several key findings are evident from examining the results: 1) George W. Bush's message of changing the tone in Washington resonated the strongest with the electorate; 2) Al Gore's "people versus the powerful" populist message worked well with his base, but fell short with swing voters; and 3) the Clinton credo of opportunity, responsibility, and community rang true with Gore and Bush voters alike.

George W. Bush's message about ending gridlock and partisan fighting and bringing a new tone to Washington was one of the messages that cut across party and ideological lines. It managed to put Gore on the defensive about his wealth of experience in Washington. Nearly eight in ten say this message would have made them more likely to vote for a candidate for president, and even 73 percent of those who voted for Gore said it made them more likely to vote for a candidate who said it. In fact, "change the tone" was the top scoring message among wired workers, Independents, and those with annual household incomes of $30,000-$50,000.

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While Bush emphasized an inclusive and bipartisan sounding theme, Gore offered a stark contrast. In his populist rhetoric, Gore was seen as a divisive fighter who would pit the people against the powerful, the poor against the rich, and the Democrats against the Republicans. The populism emphasized Gore's combative qualities at the expense of his advantage on the issues. While populism is very effective with some voters, it hits a wall with others. President Clinton stood for bridging partisanship with progress; Gore stood for winning the good fight, regardless of its divisiveness. The result was that those in the middle who had voted for Clinton turned their backs on Gore. While many suburban women wanted a fighter for their issues, many men wanted someone who stood more for freedom instead. While 55 percent of those earning less than $15,000 strongly supported the populist message, only 32 percent of those earning $15,000-$30,000 supported it, though they are a group that could have been much more receptive to this message.

Q. Would you be much more likely to vote for a candidate who espouses a populist message?

By income	< $15K	$15-30K	$30-50K	$50-75K	$75K+
Yes	55	32	35	35	34

After taking office in 1992, Clinton repeatedly referred to the New Democratic mantra of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and community of all. This message, on its face, scored higher than the people versus the powerful message (78 percent). A similar gap appears when looking at the competing messages among some of the critical swing groups that decided the 2000 election. Among Independents, those earning $30,000-$50,000, those earning $50,000-$75,000, and those who made up their minds for Bush in the last month, the "opportunity for all" message polled at least seven points higher than the "people versus the powerful" message. In an election decided by handfuls of votes, the difference between these two messages and campaign philosophies could have meant the difference between 48 percent and 52 percent.

Q. If a candidate for president said this, would it have made you much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to vote for them for president? Top arguments ranked by "much more likely."

	All	
	Much More Likely	More / Less Likely
I want to **change the tone** in Washington — enough fighting. Instead of pointing fingers and gridlock, I will find ways to work together in a bipartisan manner to get things done for America.	46	79/15
I believe in an America that offers **opportunity for all**, demands responsibility from all, and fosters a community of all, with a government that equips all Americans with the tools they need for economic success.	41	78/15
I believe very deeply that you have to be willing to stand up and fight no matter what powerful forces might be on the other side — big oil companies, big polluters, big pharmaceutical companies, and big tobacco. This election is about the **people versus the powerful**.	41	70/24

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and lost high school graduates, voters with some college, and college graduates

THE PRICE OF PROSPERITY: Only rarely did Gore use surging national prosperity as an election theme. The booming economy, balanced budget, and huge surpluses could have given his campaign a boost.

This table shows how the Bush swing voters — the voters who broke for Bush in the end — were open to Gore up until the end, but did not like his populist message (32 percent sympathetic compared to 57 percent for "change the tone").

Much More Likely	Gore Voters	Bush Voters	Bush Swing
Change the tone	42	51	57
Opportunity for all	45	36	44
People versus powerful	53	27	32

Gore lost ground with the fastest growing segment of the electorate — upwardly mobile men. While 22 million new jobs were created in the last eight years, the number of manufacturing jobs in 2000 was the same as it was in 1992: 18 million. This means that most new jobs were in the New Economy.

While Clinton performed well among middle-income men in 1992 and 1996, Gore lost them by 17 points in 2000. Gore picked up none of the Perot vote and lost considerable ground with this group.

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	Clinton	Dole	Clinton Margin	Gore	Bush	Gore Margin
$30-$50K men	43	42	+1	35	52	-17
$50-$75K men	41	49	-8	39	50	-11

In contrast, Gore did well with some upper income women, but this is related to his strong pro-choice position, which drew many of those women over to Gore. Women who voted for Gore were overwhelmingly in favor of keeping abortion legal rather than making it illegal.[1]

	Legal	Illegal
All Women	58	38
Women Less 15k	47	45
Women 15-30k	53	44
Women 30-50k	56	42
Women 50-75k	60	37
Women 75-100k	65	34
Over 100k	71	26

And another important bellwether group went to Bush that had been solidly in Clinton's camp: younger voters just starting out. **While Clinton captured the imagination of younger Americans aged 18-29, winning them by 19 points, Gore won them by only 2.**

1996			2000		
Clinton	Dole	Clinton Margin	Gore	Bush	Gore Margin
53	34	19	48	46	2

The Late Breakers

Substantial numbers of voters broke in the last month for both candidates as they climbed out of the low forties in the polls to nearly 50 percent. Almost 30 percent of the electorate made up their minds in the last 30 days.

It was among this group that the election could have been won or lost by either candidate. While Bush faced doubts about his competence, Gore faced questions about his approach to the nation's problems. Yet most of these late-deciding voters **approved of President Clinton and the job he was doing.** It was a fundamental mistake for Gore to distance himself from Clinton and keep the President off the hustings. Fears of a backlash against Clinton were unfounded: Strident anti-Clinton voters had already broken against the Vice President.

[1] *Exit polling by Voter News Service.*

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Those who broke late were:

53% Men

41% Suburban

47% Independent

64% Approve of Clinton personally

72% Approve of Clinton job rating

In the last month, Gore picked up the swing women in the election. Voters who broke against him were:

58% Men

43% Suburban

50% Independent

56% Moderate

78% Economy in right direction

(26% earn $30k - $50k, vs. 23% overall) More likely to be middle-class

These were the moderate voters Gore needed for a comfortable win, but they were turned off by the big-government, class-warfare elements in Gore's message.

Prosperity and Progress

The national political landscape going into the election was striking. There was no dominant national issue; strong majorities expressed optimism about the economy and the nation as a whole. The economy was growing at a record rate and the stock market, while volatile, remained strong. These fundamentals were reflected in the election outcome. Nearly 60 percent thought the country was headed in the right direction. Nearly 80 percent thought the economy was headed in the right direction. Fully 55 percent thought they were better off than they were eight years ago.

These numbers hold steady across a wide range of demographic and swing voter groups. Wired workers, suburban women, and those earning $50,000-$75,000 per year are more optimistic about the country and the economy than the nation as a whole. But Gore failed to win a large enough majority of the optimistic voters. He captured 60 percent of Americans who say the country is headed in the right direction, while Clinton won 69 percent of them in 1996.[1] Among Independents who say the country is headed in the right direction, Gore's share of support slides to 51percent.

Of those who said they were better off than they were eight years ago — a critical factor in many voters' decision whether or not to support the party in power — Gore won a healthy but not overwhelming 62 percent. Of those who say the economy is headed in the right direction, Gore captured only 50 percent. Clearly Gore was unable to sell himself as the only candidate who could keep the prosperity going, while painting Bush and his tax cut plan as a clear and present danger to the prosperity.

Q. Do you generally think that things in the country are headed in the right direction or are they off on the wrong track?

	All	1996[2]	Ind
Right direction	**59**	53	58
Wrong track	**31**	43	30
Gore/Bush among right direction	**60/30**	**69/24**	**51/35**

[1] *1996 exit polling by Voter News Service.*

[2] *ibid.*

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Q. In general, do you think our economy is on the right track or off on the wrong track?

	All	Ind
Right Direction	79	77
Wrong Track	15	18
Gore/Bush among right direction	50/39	**43/40**

Q. Do you think you are better off than you were eight years ago, worse off, or about the same?

	All	Ind	$30-50K	$50-75K
Better off	**55**	54	**58**	**58**
Worse off	**12**	12	**12**	**8**
About same	**22**	33	**29**	**33**
Gore/Bush among better off	**62/28**	56/32	**61/28**	**63/29**

One might think that it was difficult for Gore to take credit for the good economy. However, public opinion points the other way. Fully 54 percent give the Clinton administration a lot of credit for the economy (a great deal or a good bit). These numbers are comparable across the income scale. Even 19 percent of Bush voters give the Clinton administration a great deal of credit, including 32 percent of those who decided late for Bush. Clearly Bush's attacks on the Clinton economic record were seen as transparent by a majority of voters. But the Vice President did not spend enough time establishing the connection between the booming economy and Clinton/Gore policies.

Q. How much credit do you give to the Clinton administration for the current state of the economy?

	All	Gore	Bush	$30-50K	$50-75K	Bush Swing
Lot of credit (great deal/good bit)	**54**	**88**	**19**	55	52	**32**

Indeed, instead of focusing on the economic success and the administration's credible role in achieving that success, Gore avoided his association (until the end) with the greatest record of success of the administration in which he served. It was like running with one hand tied behind his back. At every turn, Gore would deliberately fail to cite the record of the administration in area after area. Despite this, it was the number one reason voters turned to him — so imagine how he could have done had he consistently and relentlessly pushed this basic message.

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Q. Which of the following is the most important reason why you voted for Gore?

	All
His ability to continue the prosperity of the last eight years	**34**
His experience as senator and vice president	22
Did not like George W. Bush	19
His plan for a prescription drug benefit for seniors	**10**
His leadership style	10
Other	2
Don't know	1
All of the above	1

Many pundits claim that "Clinton fatigue" was one of the most important reasons that Gore didn't capture the presidency. Despite a great deal of media hype, there is little evidence in the polling of such a phenomenon. In October 2000, President Clinton enjoyed a solid favorability rating of 57 percent as measured by the Gallup poll. **Clinton's job approval immediately prior to Election Day was among the highest of any president in the last twenty years — higher even than before his re-election in 1996.**

President	Approve	Disapprove	Data	Org
Carter	37	55	9/12-9/15/80	Gallup
Reagan	58	33	10/26-10/29/84	Gallup
Reagan	51	44	10/21-10/24/88	Gallup
Bush	34	56	10/12-10/14/92	Gallup
Clinton	54	36	10/24-10/29/96	Gallup
Clinton	57	38	10/25-10/28/00	Gallup

Thirty-four percent of Bush voters approved of Clinton's job performance and 20 percent approved of Clinton personally. Thirty-five percent of the late-breaking Bush swing voters approved of Clinton personally. This is strong evidence that using Clinton more often in terms of record and even in campaigning could have brought Gore over the top. The early breakers were anti-Clinton; the late-breakers had enough pro-Clinton voters in the mix to make the difference in the election.

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President Clinton Favorability	All	Bush Votes	Late Breaking Bush Swing	All Late-Breakers	Late Breaking Gore Swing
Favorable / Unfav	57/42	20/80	35/65	64/36	94/6

Big Government

The central impression that Al Gore left the voters was that while he would protect government programs, a vote for him would mean a return to the era of big government.

Gore led by 36 points on the attribute "is for big government." This characteristic had a significant negative correlation to vote, and as is evident in the rest of the poll, played a significant role in limiting Gore's success. One of Gore's constant refrains, and a key part of his message, was that Bush was beholden to the special interests. Despite this, Gore was seen by 5 points as more captive of special interests than Bush.

Now Bush needs to provide not just a general framework of his views, but his actual policy prescriptions. And here Bush is vulnerable since voters favored the policies of Gore and the Democrats in the election. He must now face the challenge of a legislative program that overcomes that basic obstacle or he will fail as president.

	Gore	Bush	Gore Margin
Is for protecting government programs	70	16	54
Is for big government	60	24	**36**
Has the best plan for continuing the progress of the past eight years	55	28	27
Has the best plan for continuing the economic prosperity	51	37	14
Has the best plan for bringing prescription drugs to seniors	47	28	19
Strong leader	48	42	6
Takes positions on the issues I agree with	49	44	5
Fiscally responsible	43	40	3
Captive of special interests	37	32	5
Is an independent thinker who does not stick to either the liberal or conservative party line	35	38	-3
Reforming government programs	40	45	-5

...Gore lost them by 17 percent.

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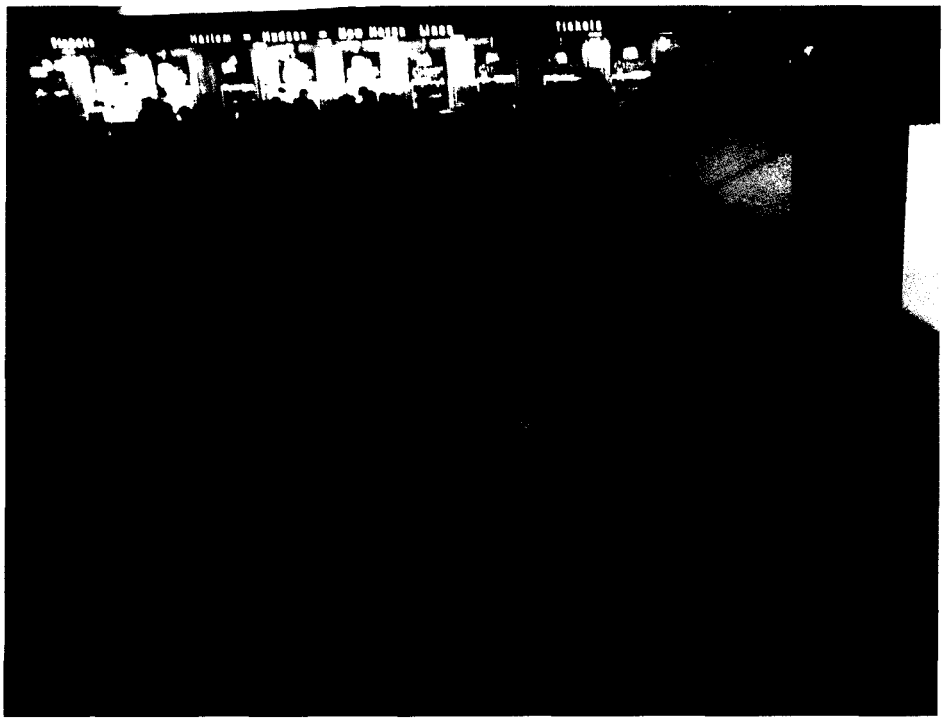
Going Forward: The New Democrat Message

While Gore did not capture a majority of the voters, neither did Bush, leaving the vital center up for grabs in 2001. This center is looking neither for a return to big government nor a return to fend-for-yourself policies. The center is looking for fiscally responsible progress on the major issues of the day like the availability of health care.

In this post-election poll, the central principles of the DLC were tested based on its *Hyde Park Declaration*. All of the DLC's principles are supported by more than three-quarters of American voters.

Whether Bush will move forward with plans to expand education and advance prescription drugs, or will take his anti-government message too far and fail, remains to be seen. The tables are now turned, and Bush, to be successful, must reach out to the Gore swing voters to build a larger coalition than he had on Election Day. And those voters are looking for a program of action, not inaction.

Clearly, the DLC's Hyde Park principles would be a good road map for legislative action for the next president and Congress and a path of consensus in a time of great partisan division.



NO BIG THEME: While Gore won among voters most concerned with a single issue, he lost big among those focused on larger messages, such as uniting Washington and limiting the size of government programs.

Gore won the voters who cared about the issues by 18 percent...

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Q. Now I am going to read you some statements and proposals that the next president might make. For each, please tell me which candidate you think stands for each statement, and whether you support or oppose it.

	Applies More to Gore/Bush		Support/Oppose Statement or Proposal	
Ranked by "Strongly Support "	**Much More Gore**	**Gore Margin**	**Strongly Support**	**Support/ Oppose**
I believe that all Americans must have **access to health insurance** in a system that balances governmental and individual responsibility.	46	39	52	84/11
I believe in **preventing crime and punishing criminals,** and that America's criminal justice system should be rooted in and responsive to the communities it serves.	15	-32	48	80/14
I believe that public policies should **reinforce marriage, promote family,** demand parental responsibility, and discourage out-of-wedlock births.	15	-36	45	71/24
I believe that American **citizenship entails responsibilities as well as rights,** and I mean to ask our citizens to give something back to their communities and their country.	26	5	44	81/13
I believe in a **new social compact** that requires and rewards work in exchange for public assistance and that ensures that no family with a full-time worker will live in poverty.	41	43	43	77/16
I believe that **fiscal discipline is fundamental** to sustained economic growth as well as responsible government.	25	-4	42	79/14
I believe that the private sector creates prosperity and jobs and that the government should help ensure that everyone has the **opportunity to share in that prosperity.**	25	18	40	73/19
I believe that government's proper role in the New Economy is to **equip working Americans with new tools** for economic success and security.	33	24	40	81/12
I believe that we ought to **expand opportunity, not government.**	20	-25	39	75/19

Contributing Photographers: AP/Worldwide Photos - Cover, 4-5,9,10,12,18,23,25,38, / AFP Photo - 14 / Corbis Images - 7,13,17,21 / The Hawk Eye - Inside Cover / Image Bank - 32 / Magnum - 17 / *Washington Post* - 40

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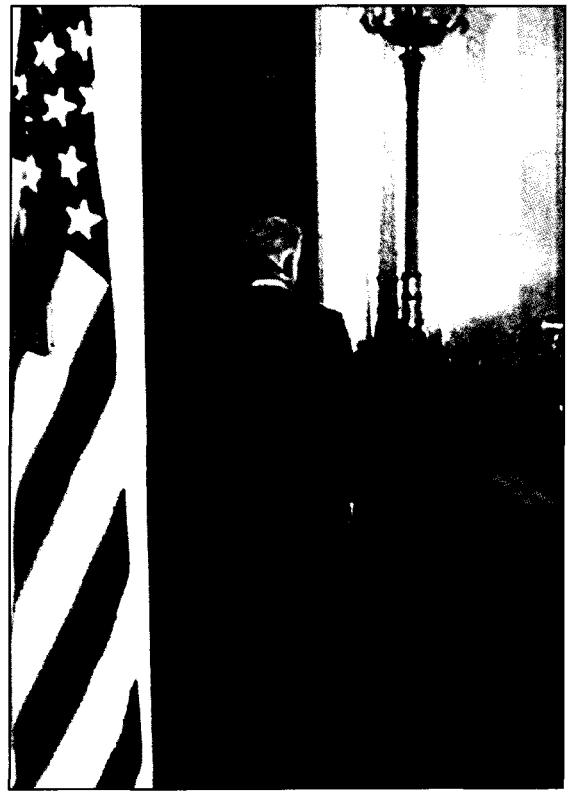

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PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON, DECEMBER 2, 1998

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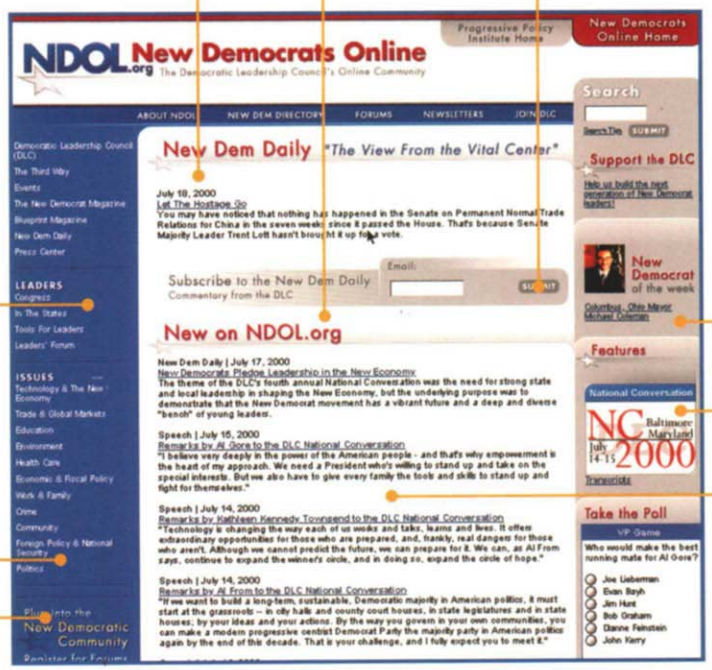

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